

The Administration credited Rep. Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.) with developing the recommendations announced by President Carter today which reorganize the nation's emergency preparedness agencies and consolidate them into one department.

Rep. Tsongas authored a bill last year which served as a catalyst for a White House study of the federal emergency preparedness and response agencies. It is the Congressman's legislation which is the basis of the comprehensive reorganization plan.

"The President has adopted all of the recommendations included in the Tsongas bill," said Greg Schneiders, White House Director of Special Projects and Director of the Reorganization Task Force. "The close cooperation with Congress and particularly the basic work done by Rep. Tsongas who sponsored the bill was very instrumental in the development of these recommendations which the President accepted."

Last March, Tsongas was joined by 52 Members of the House of Representatives in asking Carter to approve the reorganization plan. On learning that the President had adopted his recommendations, Rep. Tsongas said today:

"I am pleased that the President has adopted this plan which provides the most effective means for ensuring our nation's emergency preparedness and response functions. The independent agency concept offers the best hope for an effective and well-managed effort without incurring large new costs or bureaucracy," said Tsongas.

The Tsongas plan called for consolidation of three major agencies -- the Federal Preparedness Agency of the General Services Administration, the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Defense Civil Preparedness Administration of the Defense Department -- whose functions overlap. The President's plan added the Fire Prevention and Control Administration and the flood insurance program. These agencies have been responsible to literally dozens of committees, interagency task forces and study groups, all working on federal preparedness planning.

"At present, there is no overall coordination of operation or policy," said Tsongas. "Yet, no other function of government is more fundamental than protecting the lives and property of citizens against threats and disasters that defy remedy on an individual basis."

According to last year's budget, the consolidation of the three major agencies would save about \$15 million. The consolidation would increase efficiency by providing an integrated approach to planning response and relief for disasters of all types. It will also create a single point of contact for state and local governments and make the single agency accountable to the President and Congress.

The President submitted the plan to Congress today. Congress has sixty days to pass a resolution of disapproval or the plan becomes law. Tsongas pledged to actively work to insure Congressional approval.